

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 26, 2015

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2015–16 REGULAR SESSION

## Assembly Joint Resolution

No. 2

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**Introduced by Assembly Members Nazarian, Achadjian, and Alejo, Atkins, Baker, Bigelow, Bloom, Bonta, Brown, Burke, Calderon, Chang, Chávez, Chiu, Chu, Cooper, Dababneh, Dahle, Eggman, Cristina Garcia, Eduardo Garcia, Gatto, Gipson, Gomez, Gray, Hadley, Irwin, Jones-Sawyer, Kim, Lackey, Levine, Low, Maienschein, Mayes, McCarty, Medina, Mullin, Obernolte, O'Donnell, Olson, Perea, Rendon, Ridley-Thomas, Salas, Santiago, Mark Stone, Ting, Waldron, Weber, Wilk, and Williams**  
(Principal coauthors: Senators Cannella, Hall, Lara, Liu, Mendoza, and Runner)

December 1, 2014

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Assembly Joint Resolution No. 2—Relative to the Armenian Genocide.

### LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AJR 2, as amended, Nazarian. Armenian Genocide.

*This measure would, among other things, designate the year of 2015 as "State of California Year of Commemoration of the Centennial Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923," designate April 24, 2015, as "State of California Day of Commemoration of the Centennial Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923," urge the Republic of Turkey to acknowledge the facts of the Armenian Genocide and to work toward a just resolution, and would call upon the President of the United States and the United States Congress to formally and consistently reaffirm the historical truth that the atrocities committed against the Armenian people constituted genocide.*

~~This measure would, among other things, designate the month of April 2015, as “California Month of Remembrance for the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923,” and would call upon the President and Congress of the United States to formally and consistently recognize and reaffirm the historical truth that the atrocities committed against the Armenian people constituted genocide, and would call upon the Republic of Turkey to acknowledge the facts of the Armenian Genocide and to work toward a just resolution.~~

Fiscal committee: no.

1     *WHEREAS, Armenians have resided in Asia Minor and the*  
2     *Caucasus for approximately four millennia, and have a long and*  
3     *rich history in the region, including the establishment of many*  
4     *kingdoms, and despite Armenians’ historic presence, stewardship,*  
5     *and autonomy in the region, Turkish rulers of the Ottoman Empire*  
6     *and the Republic of Turkey subjected Armenians to severe and*  
7     *unjust persecution and brutality, including wholesale massacres*  
8     *beginning in the 1890s; and*

9     *WHEREAS, The Armenian nation was subjected to a systematic*  
10    *and premeditated genocide officially beginning on April 24, 1915,*  
11    *at the hands of the Young Turk Government of the Ottoman Empire*  
12    *from 1915–1919 and continued at the hands of the Kemalist*  
13    *Movement of Turkey from 1920–1923 whereby over 1.5 million*  
14    *Armenian men, women, and children were slaughtered or marched*  
15    *to their deaths in an effort to annihilate the Armenian nation in*  
16    *the first genocide of modern times, while thousands of surviving*  
17    *Armenian women and children were forcibly converted and*  
18    *Islamized, and hundreds of thousands more were subjected to*  
19    *ethnic cleansing during the period of the modern Republic of*  
20    *Turkey from 1924–1937; and*

21    *WHEREAS, During the genocides of the Christians living in the*  
22    *Ottoman Empire and surrounding regions, which occurred during*  
23    *the first one-half of the 20th century, 1.5 million men, women, and*  
24    *children of Armenian descent, and hundreds of thousands of*  
25    *Assyrians, Greeks, and other Christians, lost their lives at the*  
26    *hands of the Ottoman Turkish Empire and the Republic of Turkey,*  
27    *constituting one of the most atrocious violations of human rights*  
28    *in the history of the world; and*

29    *WHEREAS, These crimes against humanity also had the*  
30    *consequence of permanently removing all traces of the Armenians*

1 *and other targeted people from their historic homelands of more*  
2 *than four millennia, and enriching the perpetrators with the lands*  
3 *and other property of the victims of these crimes, including the*  
4 *usurpation of several thousand churches; and*

5 *WHEREAS, In response to the genocide and at the behest of*  
6 *President Woodrow Wilson and the United States State*  
7 *Department, the Near East Relief organization was founded, and*  
8 *became the first congressionally sanctioned American*  
9 *philanthropic effort created exclusively to provide humanitarian*  
10 *assistance and rescue to the Armenian nation and other Christian*  
11 *minorities from annihilation, who went on to survive and thrive*  
12 *outside of their ancestral homeland all over the world and*  
13 *specifically in this state; and*

14 *WHEREAS, Near East Relief succeeded, with the active*  
15 *participation of the citizens from this state, in delivering \$117*  
16 *million of assistance, and saving more than one million refugees,*  
17 *including 132,000 orphans, between 1915 and 1930, by delivering*  
18 *food, clothing, and materials for shelter, setting up refugee camps,*  
19 *clinics, hospitals, and orphanages; and*

20 *WHEREAS, The Armenian nation survived the genocide despite*  
21 *the attempt by the Ottoman Empire and the modern Republic of*  
22 *Turkey to exterminate it; and*

23 *WHEREAS, Adolf Hitler, in persuading his army commanders*  
24 *that the merciless persecution and killing of Jews, Poles, and other*  
25 *people would bring no retribution, declared, “Who, after all,*  
26 *speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?”; and*

27 *WHEREAS, The planning and implementation of genocide is*  
28 *indisputably recognized in international law as a crime against*  
29 *humanity and is punishable as such, yet has remained unpunished*  
30 *for nearly 100 years, as the government of Turkey is allowed with*  
31 *impunity to distort history and to deny the genocide and its*  
32 *consequences perpetrated both by its Ottoman predecessor and*  
33 *its own predecessor regimes despite international recognition of*  
34 *the Armenian Genocide by 23 countries, including the United*  
35 *States of America; and*

36 *WHEREAS, On November 4, 1918, immediately after the*  
37 *collapse of the Young Turk regime and before the founding of the*  
38 *Republic of Turkey by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in 1923, the Ottoman*  
39 *Parliament considered a motion on the crimes committed by the*  
40 *Committee of Union and Progress (CUP): “A population of one*

1 million people guilty of nothing except belonging to the Armenian  
2 nation were massacred and exterminated, including even women  
3 and children.” The Minister of Interior at the time, Fethi Bey,  
4 responded by telling the Parliament: “It is the intention of the  
5 government to cure every single injustice done up until now, as  
6 far as the means allow, to make possible the return to their homes  
7 of those sent into exile, and to compensate for their material loss  
8 as far as possible”; and

9 WHEREAS, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk made a historic admission  
10 in an interview published in the *Los Angeles Examiner* on August  
11 1, 1926: “These leftovers from the former Young Turk Party, who  
12 should have been made accountable for the lives of millions of our  
13 Christian subjects who were ruthlessly driven, en masse, from  
14 their homes and massacred”; and

15 WHEREAS, The Parliamentary Investigative Committee  
16 proceeded to collect relevant documents describing the actions of  
17 those responsible for the Armenian mass killings and turned them  
18 over to the Turkish Military Tribunal. CUP’s leading figures were  
19 found guilty of massacring Armenians and hanged or given lengthy  
20 prison sentences. The Turkish Military Tribunal requested that  
21 Germany extradite to Turkey the masterminds of the massacres  
22 who had fled the country. After German refusal, they were tried  
23 in absentia and sentenced to death; and

24 WHEREAS, Unlike other people and governments that have  
25 admitted and denounced the abuses and crimes of predecessor  
26 regimes, and despite the Turkish government’s earlier admissions  
27 and the overwhelming proof of genocidal intent, the Republic of  
28 Turkey inexplicably and adamantly has denied the occurrence of  
29 the crimes against humanity committed by the Ottoman and Young  
30 Turk rulers for many years, and continues to do so a full century  
31 since the first crimes constituting genocide occurred; and

32 WHEREAS, Those denials compound the grief of the few  
33 remaining survivors of the atrocities, desecrate the memory of the  
34 victims, cause continuing pain to the descendants of the victims,  
35 and deprive the surviving Armenian nation, both on individual  
36 and collective levels, of their ancestral land, property, culture,  
37 heritage, financial assets, and population growth; and

38 WHEREAS, The Republic of Turkey has escalated its  
39 international campaign of Armenian Genocide denial, maintained  
40 its blockade of Armenia, and increased its pressure on the small

1 *but growing movement in Turkey acknowledging the Armenian*  
2 *Genocide and seeking justice for this systematic campaign of*  
3 *destruction of millions of Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians, and other*  
4 *Christians upon their biblical-era homelands; and*

5 *WHEREAS, Those citizens of Turkey, both Armenian and*  
6 *non-Armenian, who continue to speak the truth about the Armenian*  
7 *Genocide, such as human rights activist and journalist Hrant Dink,*  
8 *continue to be silenced by violent means; and*

9 *WHEREAS, Leaders of nations with strategic, commercial, and*  
10 *cultural ties to the Republic of Turkey should be reminded of their*  
11 *duty to encourage Turkish officials to cease efforts to distort facts*  
12 *and deny the history of events surrounding the Armenian Genocide;*  
13 *and*

14 *WHEREAS, The failure of the international community to hold*  
15 *responsible nations accountable for crimes against humanity*  
16 *results in a travesty of justice and sets a negative precedent; and*  
17

18 *WHEREAS, There is continued concern about the welfare of*  
19 *Christians in the Republic of Turkey, their right to worship and*  
20 *practice freely, and the legal status and condition of thousands of*  
21 *ancient Armenian churches, monasteries, cemeteries, and other*  
22 *historical and cultural structures, sites, and antiquities in the*  
23 *Republic of Turkey; and*

24 *WHEREAS, The United States is on record as having officially*  
25 *recognized the Armenian Genocide in the United States*  
26 *government's May 28, 1951, written statement to the International*  
27 *Court of Justice regarding the Reservations to the Convention on*  
28 *the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, through*  
29 *President Ronald Reagan's April 22, 1981, Proclamation No.*  
30 *4838, and by congressional legislation including House Joint*  
31 *Resolution 148 adopted on April 9, 1975, and House Joint*  
32 *Resolution 247 adopted on September 12, 1984; and*

33 *WHEREAS, Even prior to the Convention on the Prevention*  
34 *and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the United States has*  
35 *a record of having sought to justly and constructively address the*  
36 *consequences of the Ottoman Empire's intentional destruction of*  
37 *the Armenian people, including through United States Senate*  
38 *Concurrent Resolution 12 adopted on February 9, 1916, United*  
39 *States Senate Resolution 359 adopted on May 11, 1920, and*  
40 *President Woodrow Wilson's November 22, 1920, decision entitled,*

1 “*The Frontier between Armenia and Turkey*,” which was issued  
2 as a binding arbitral award, yet has not been enforced to this date  
3 despite its legally binding status; and

4 WHEREAS, President Barack Obama entered office “calling  
5 for Turkey’s acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide” and on  
6 April 24, 2013, and similarly on April 24, 2014, he further stated,  
7 “A full, frank, and just acknowledgment of the facts is in all of our  
8 interests. Peoples and nations grow stronger, and build a more  
9 just and tolerant future, by acknowledging and reckoning with  
10 painful elements of the past”; and

11 WHEREAS, California is home to the largest  
12 Armenian-American population in the United States, and  
13 Armenians living in California have enriched our state through  
14 their leadership and contribution in business, agriculture,  
15 academia, government, and the arts, many of whom have family  
16 members who experienced firsthand the horror and evil of the  
17 Armenian Genocide and its ongoing denial; and

18 WHEREAS, Every person should be made aware and educated  
19 about the Armenian Genocide and other crimes against humanity,  
20 and this state has been at the forefront of encouraging and  
21 promoting a curriculum relating to human rights and genocide in  
22 order to empower future generations to prevent the recurrence of  
23 genocide; and

24 WHEREAS, April 24, 1915, is globally observed and recognized  
25 as the commencement of the Armenian Genocide and April 24,  
26 2015, will mark the centennial anniversary since the  
27 commencement of the Armenian Genocide; and

28 WHEREAS, Armenians in this state and throughout the world,  
29 have not been provided with justice for the crimes perpetrated  
30 against the Armenian nation despite the fact that a century has  
31 passed since the crimes were first committed; and

32 WHEREAS, The Armenian people, in this state and elsewhere,  
33 remain resolved and their spirit continues to thrive a century after  
34 their near annihilation; now, therefore, be it

35 RESOLVED BY THE ASSEMBLY AND THE SENATE OF  
36 THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, JOINTLY, That the Legislature  
37 hereby designates the year of 2015 as “State of California Year  
38 of Commemoration of the Centennial Anniversary of the Armenian  
39 Genocide of 1915–1923” and in doing so, intends, through the  
40 enactment of legislation, that the Armenian Genocide is properly

1 *commemorated and taught to its citizens and visitors through*  
2 *statewide educational and cultural events; and be it further*

3 *RESOLVED, That the Legislature hereby designates April 24,*  
4 *2015, as “State of California Day of Commemoration of the*  
5 *Centennial Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923”;*  
6 *and be it further*

7 *RESOLVED, That the Legislature commends its conscientious*  
8 *educators who teach about human rights and genocide, and intends*  
9 *for them, through the enactment of legislation, to continue to*  
10 *enhance their efforts to educate students at all levels about the*  
11 *experience of the Armenians and other crimes against humanity;*  
12 *and be it further*

13 *RESOLVED, That the Legislature hereby commends the*  
14 *extraordinary service which was delivered by Near East Relief to*  
15 *the survivors of the Armenian Genocide and the Assyrian Genocide,*  
16 *including thousands of direct beneficiaries of American*  
17 *philanthropy who are the parents, grandparents, and*  
18 *great-grandparents of many Californian Armenians and Assyrians,*  
19 *and pledges its intent, through the enactment of legislation, to*  
20 *working with community groups, nonprofit organizations, citizens,*  
21 *state personnel, and the community at large to host statewide*  
22 *educational and cultural events; and be it further*

23 *RESOLVED, That the Legislature deplores the persistent,*  
24 *ongoing efforts by any person, in this country or abroad, to deny*  
25 *the historical fact of the Armenian Genocide; and be it further*

26 *RESOLVED, That the Legislature urges the Republic of Turkey*  
27 *to acknowledge the facts of the Armenian Genocide and to work*  
28 *toward a just resolution, to honor its obligations under*  
29 *international treaties and human rights laws, to end all forms of*  
30 *religious discrimination and persecution, to return Christian*  
31 *church properties to their rightful owners, and to allow the owners*  
32 *and congregants of all churches to conduct their religious activities*  
33 *unhindered, including, but not limited to, prayer services and*  
34 *religious observances, education and training, community*  
35 *gatherings, and social services; and be it further*

36 *RESOLVED, That the Legislature respectfully calls upon the*  
37 *President of the United States and the United States Congress to*  
38 *act likewise and to formally and consistently reaffirm the historical*  
39 *truth that the atrocities committed against the Armenian people*  
40 *constituted genocide; and be it further*

1     RESOLVED, *That the Legislature calls on the President of the*  
2     *United States to work toward equitable, constructive, stable, and*  
3     *durable Armenian-Turkish relations based upon the Republic of*  
4     *Turkey's full acknowledgment of the facts and ongoing*  
5     *consequences of the Armenian Genocide, and a fair, just, and*  
6     *comprehensive international resolution of this crime against*  
7     *humanity; and be it further*

8     RESOLVED, *That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit*  
9     *copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the*  
10    *United States, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to*  
11    *the Majority Leader of the Senate, to each Senator and*  
12    *Representative from California in the Congress of the United*  
13    *States, to the Governor of California, every member of the*  
14    *California State Legislature, the Superintendent of Public*  
15    *Instruction, and to the Turkish Ambassador to the United States.*

16    ~~WHEREAS, During the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923, 1.5~~  
17    ~~million men, women, and children of Armenian descent lost their~~  
18    ~~lives at the hands of the Ottoman-Turkish Empire in its attempt to~~  
19    ~~systematically eliminate the Armenian race; and~~

20    ~~WHEREAS, Despite Armenians' historic presence, stewardship,~~  
21    ~~and autonomy in the region, Turkish rulers of the Ottoman Empire~~  
22    ~~subjected Armenians to severe and unjust persecution and brutality,~~  
23    ~~including, but not limited to, widespread and wholesale massacres~~  
24    ~~beginning in the 1890s, most notably the Hamidian Massacres~~  
25    ~~from 1894 to 1896 and the Adana Massacre of 1909; and~~

26    ~~WHEREAS, The earlier massacres and subsequent genocide of~~  
27    ~~the Armenians constitute one of the most atrocious violations of~~  
28    ~~human rights in the history of the world; and~~

29    ~~WHEREAS, Adolph Hitler, in persuading his army commanders~~  
30    ~~that the merciless persecution and killing of Jews, Poles, and other~~  
31    ~~people would bring no retribution, declared, "Who, after all, speaks~~  
32    ~~today of the annihilation of the Armenians?"; and~~

33    ~~WHEREAS, Unlike other people and governments that have~~  
34    ~~admitted and denounced the abuses and crimes of predecessor~~  
35    ~~regimes, and despite the overwhelming proof of genocidal intent,~~  
36    ~~the Republic of Turkey has inexplicably and adamantly denied the~~  
37    ~~occurrence of the crimes against humanity committed by the~~  
38    ~~Ottoman and Young Turk rulers. Those denials compound the~~  
39    ~~grief of the few remaining survivors of the atrocities, desecrate~~



1 the memory of the victims, and cause continuing pain to the  
2 descendants of the victims; and

3 WHEREAS, Leaders of nations with strategic, commercial, and  
4 cultural ties to the Republic of Turkey should be reminded of their  
5 duty to encourage Turkish officials to cease efforts to distort facts  
6 and deny the history of events surrounding the Armenian Genocide;  
7 and

8 WHEREAS, The Republic of Turkey has escalated its  
9 international campaign of Armenian Genocide denial, maintained  
10 its blockade of Armenia and increased its pressure on the small  
11 but growing movement in Turkey acknowledging the Armenian  
12 Genocide and seeking justice for this systematic campaign of  
13 destruction of millions of Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians, Pontians,  
14 Syrians, and other Christians upon their biblical-era homelands;  
15 and

16 WHEREAS, Those citizens of Turkey, both Armenian and  
17 non-Armenian, who continue to speak the truth about the Armenian  
18 Genocide, such as human rights activist and journalist Hrant Dink,  
19 continue to be silenced by violent means; and

20 WHEREAS, The accelerated level and scope of denial and  
21 revisionism, coupled with the passage of time and the fact that  
22 very few survivors remain who can serve as reminders of the  
23 indescribable brutality and the lives that were tormented, compel  
24 a sense of urgency in efforts to solidify recognition of historical  
25 truth; and

26 WHEREAS, The United States is on record as having officially  
27 recognized the Armenian Genocide in the United States  
28 government's May 28, 1951, written statement to the International  
29 Court of Justice regarding the Reservations to the Convention on  
30 the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, through  
31 President Ronald Reagan's April 22, 1981, Proclamation No. 4838,  
32 and by Congressional legislation including United States House  
33 of Representatives Joint Resolution 148 adopted on April 9, 1975,  
34 and United States House of Representatives Joint Resolution 247  
35 adopted on September 12, 1984; and

36 WHEREAS, Even prior to the Convention on the Prevention  
37 and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the United States has  
38 a record of having sought to justly and constructively address the  
39 consequences of the Ottoman Empire's intentional destruction of  
40 the Armenian people, including through United States Senate

1 Concurrent Resolution 12 adopted on February 9, 1916, United  
2 States Senate Resolution 359 adopted on May 11, 1920, and  
3 President Woodrow Wilson's November 22, 1920, decision  
4 entitled, The Frontier between Armenia and Turkey; and

5 WHEREAS, By consistently remembering and forcefully  
6 condemning the atrocities committed against the Armenians, and  
7 honoring the survivors as well as other victims of similar heinous  
8 conduct, we guard against repetition of such acts of genocide and  
9 provide the American public with a greater understanding of  
10 history; and

11 WHEREAS, There is continued concern about the welfare of  
12 Christians in the Republic of Turkey, their right to worship and  
13 practice their faith freely, and the legal status and condition of  
14 churches and other places of worship, monasteries, schools,  
15 hospitals, monuments, relics, holy sites, and other religious  
16 properties in the Republic of Turkey; and

17 WHEREAS, California is home to the largest  
18 Armenian-American population in the United States, and  
19 Armenians living in California have enriched our state through  
20 their leadership and contribution in business, agriculture, academia,  
21 government, and the arts; and

22 WHEREAS, The State of California has been at the forefront  
23 of encouraging and promoting a curriculum relating to human  
24 rights and genocide in order to empower future generations to  
25 prevent the recurrence of genocide; and

26 WHEREAS, On April 24, 2014, President Obama stated, "A  
27 full, frank, and just acknowledgment of the facts is in all of our  
28 interests. Peoples and nations grow stronger, and build a foundation  
29 for a more just and tolerant future, by acknowledging and  
30 reckoning with painful elements of the past"; and

31 WHEREAS, President Obama entered office having stated his  
32 "firmly held conviction that the Armenian Genocide is not an  
33 allegation, a personal opinion, or a point of view, but rather a  
34 widely documented fact supported by an overwhelming body of  
35 historical evidence" and affirmed his record of "calling for  
36 Turkey's acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide"; and

37 WHEREAS, The United States' national interests in establishing  
38 equitable, constructive, stable, and durable relations between  
39 Armenians and Turks cannot be meaningfully advanced by  
40 circumventing or otherwise seeking to avoid the central political,

1 legal, security, and moral issue between these two nations;  
2 Turkey's denial of truth and justice for the Armenian Genocide;  
3 and

4 WHEREAS, The 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide  
5 signifies a global demand for justice by Armenians worldwide and  
6 all people of good will and this centennial marks one of the 20th  
7 century's greatest crimes against humanity, when in 1915, the  
8 Turkish Government began a premeditated and systematic  
9 campaign to uproot the Armenian population from its ancestral  
10 homeland and slaughter 1.5 million defenseless men, women, and  
11 children; now, therefore, be it

12 *Resolved by the Assembly and the Senate of the State of*  
13 *California, jointly,* That the Legislature hereby designates the  
14 month of April 2015, as "California Month of Remembrance for  
15 the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923"; and be it further

16 *Resolved,* That the Legislature commends its conscientious  
17 educators who teach about human rights and genocide; and be it  
18 further

19 *Resolved,* That the Legislature respectfully calls upon the  
20 President and Congress of the United States to act likewise and to  
21 formally and consistently recognize and reaffirm the historical  
22 truth that the atrocities committed against the Armenian people  
23 constituted genocide; and be it further

24 *Resolved,* That the Legislature calls on the President of the  
25 United States to work toward equitable, constructive, stable, and  
26 durable Armenian-Turkish relations based upon the Republic of  
27 Turkey's full acknowledgment of the facts and ongoing  
28 consequences of the Armenian Genocide, and a fair, just, and  
29 comprehensive international resolution of this crime against  
30 humanity; and be it further

31 *Resolved,* That the Legislature declares that it deplors the  
32 persistent, ongoing efforts by any person, in this country or abroad,  
33 to deny the historical fact of the Armenian Genocide; and be it  
34 further

35 *Resolved,* That the Legislature calls upon the Republic of Turkey  
36 to acknowledge the facts of the Armenian Genocide and to work  
37 toward a just resolution; and be it further

38 *Resolved,* That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies  
39 of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United  
40 States, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to the

- 1 Majority Leader of the Senate, to each Senator and Representative
- 2 from California in the Congress of the United States, the Governor,
- 3 and the Turkish Ambassador to the United States.

O